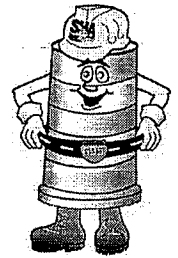




I-695 Baltimore Beltway Projects

Scoop on the Loops



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC ALERT

STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION BEGINS I-695/CHARLES STREET INTERCHANGE PROJECT IN TOWSON

**Construction Traffic Shift and Long-Term Lane Closures on Charles Street Bridge
to Begin on Tuesday Morning, March 17**

SHA Strongly Advises Travelers to Plan for Extra Travel Time along Charles Street

(March 13, 2009) – On Monday, March 16, the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration (SHA) will begin demolition and replacement of the MD 139 (Charles Street) bridge over I-695 (Baltimore Beltway). The work is part of a three-year, \$50 million interchange reconstruction project which also includes the rehabilitation of the I-695 bridge over the Light Rail.

The first traffic shift will begin Monday, March 16 and allow safe demolition and replacement of one half of the bridge during the next year. The Charles Street Bridge was built in 1955 as part of the original Baltimore Beltway; the bridge is structurally deficient and must be replaced. The new bridge will be wider, longer and higher to accommodate future traffic needs at the interchange and the eventual widening of I-695 underneath.

There will be major traffic pattern changes along Charles Street and I-695 during the construction project, including temporary lane shifts and temporary and long-term lane and ramp closures. SHA and the contractor will maintain access to businesses and residents throughout the project, which will be complete late-fall 2012, weather permitting.

(More)

Description of Traffic Shift and Detours

Between 7 p.m. Monday, March 16 and 6 a.m. Tuesday, March 17, SHA and its contractor, the Six-M Company of Delta, Pa. will institute a long-term change in traffic patterns at the Charles Street interchange. Both northbound and southbound lanes of Charles Street will be shifted to the east side of the existing bridge. (In case of inclement weather, the overnight traffic shifts will be done the next possible weeknight.) Motorists are strongly encouraged to avoid using the Charles Street interchange on Monday night, and to use alternate routes such as York Road (MD 45).

Beginning at 7 p.m. on Monday, motorists will encounter single lane closures on Charles Street to facilitate the traffic shift. Additionally, there will be an **overnight closure of the ramp from eastbound I-695 to northbound Charles Street** between 8 p.m. Monday night and 5 a.m. Tuesday morning. Motorists will be directed to eastbound I-695 past the interchange to Exit 25, MD 45 - York Road north, to westbound I-695 back to Exit 24, Charles Street. Weather permitting, the new traffic patterns will in effect on the Charles Street Bridge by 6 a.m. Tuesday.

The new traffic pattern will reduce the number of through lanes on the bridge. Southbound Charles Street will be reduced to one through lane on the bridge, with two through lanes south of the bridge.

Northbound Charles Street will be reduced to two through lanes on the bridge. Additionally, motorists in the right lane of northbound Charles Street will be forced to turn right either at Kenilworth Drive or the ramp to eastbound I-695. Motorists wishing to travel from northbound Charles Street to the westbound I-695 will continue to be able to use the right ramp or access the left ramp via the roundabout at Bellona Avenue.

This interchange currently carries more than 120,000 vehicles per day. The Charles Street Bridge will remain open to traffic during construction; however, the number of travel lanes on the bridge are being reduced to enhance safety for travelers and construction crews. The speed limit on I-695 is reduced to 50 mph in the work zone. SHA reminds all drivers to buckle up, obey posted speed limits, "think orange," and stay alert in the work zone. Motorists can learn more about Maryland's highway safety program by logging onto www.choosesafetyforlife.com.

Citizens who have questions about traffic operations along I-695 and Charles Street may call the project field office at 410-296-9041 or SHA's District 4 Office at 410-321-2800 or toll free at 1-800-962-3077. Citizens may view the I-695/Charles Street project web page on SHA's website, www.marylandroads.com. Click "Current Construction Projects" on the home page menu to reach the SHA Projects Page.